

Sant Maria Plantation
Perkins Road
Baton Rouge
East Baton Rouge Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1137

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No LA-1137

SANTA MARIA PLANTATION

Location: On Perkins Road (La. 427), near the southern boundary of East Baton Rouge Parish and .7 miles north of Bayou Manchac, Baton Rouge vicinity, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Present Owners/
Occupants: Mr. and Mrs. Verdie Reece Perkins.

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: Santa Maria, a raised, columned cottage, is a fine example of the vernacular plantation house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: late 1870s.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original & subsequent owners: Legal description of property: "A certain tract of parcel of land together with all the buildings and improvements thereon, in Section 53 and 54, Township 8 South Range 2 East, Greensburg Land District of Louisiana, containing 3.08 acres... part of 470.6 acre tract..."

Conveyance Book 4, Folio 196, December 28, 1877,
Albin Rochereau to Kate Knowlton, \$3,215.

Conveyance Book 25, Folio 570, January 3, 1901,
heirs of Kate Knowlton to Stephen B. Jones, \$8,250.

Conveyance Book 28, Folio 3, April 22, 1902,
Stephen B. Jones to W. R. Munson.

Conveyance Book 38, Folio 303, March 11, 1907,
Sheriff's auction to Putnam and King, Ltd. (In 1909, they charged their name to Putnam and Norman).

Conveyance Book 77, Folio 71, April 5, 1919,
Putnam and Norman to G.O. Steadman.

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Conveyance Book 98, Folio 138, June 9, 1921
G.O. Steadman to Putnam and Norman.

Conveyance Book 168, Folio 254, April 13, 1926,
Putnam and Norman to Mrs. Marie Carrie Elder
Gibbens and Andrew Bradford Hagan.

Conveyance Book 267, Folio 46, December 1, 1932
Mrs. Cibbens to Hagan, her interest.

Conveyance Book 1283, Folio 243, January 4, 1957,
A.B. Hagan to Santa Maria Plantation, Inc. 480.79
acres, \$270,045.

Conveyance Book 1501, Folio 320, May 20, 1960,
Santa Maria Plantation, Inc. to Verdie Reece
Perkins, 3.08 acres, \$14,000.

4. Original plans and construction:

Cladys Morrill, a former resident, described the original structure in a letter dated February 28, 1964, on file in the State Historic Preservation Office, Baton Rouge: "There was a small house, consisting of two rooms on it and they built the main house using the original two rooms for the dining room and kitchen which was attached to the main building by a covered porch....It was a raised, two-story house -- there was a wide porch across the entire front with stairs in the center (not on the side as was later done). There was a central hall behind which was the living room with a very large fireplace. On each side of the hall were bedrooms and behind all another porch with a smaller bedroom to the side. From the back porch a stairs and covered porch led to the dining room and kitchen which were made from the original small place on the grounds when it was purchased. A stairway led from the living room upstairs to the second story. When we lived at Santa Maria there were two finished bedrooms upstairs and the rest of the floor was open....There was, also, a large unfinished basement which was used for storage."

5. Alterations and additions:

The dining room and kitchen, originally in a separate structure, were removed. The rear gallery was filled in with three small rooms. An addition to the rear, consisting of a hall and several rooms, was constructed in the 1950s or 1960s. New stairs to the front gallery, approaching it from the end, were added, and the northwest and southeast sides were resheathed in clapboard.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

During the tenure of Charles Knowlton and his wife, Kate Andrews Knowlton, Santa Maria was a post-bellum plantation of some significance to the area. The 1880 Agriculture Census reveals the size of the operation. At that time, the Knowltons owned 740 acres of land, of which 440 were improved and 300 were woodlands. Twelve acres planted in sugar cane in 1879 yielded 17 hogsheads of sugar and 1,200 gallons of molasses. Twenty acres of corn yielded 750 bushels.

Gladys Morrill's grandparents were "Charles P. Knowlton (Captain in Confederate Army) and his wife, Katherine (Kate) Andrews, daughter of John Andrews, the founder of Belle Grove Plantation." In a letter on file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Mrs. Morill related what she knew of the history of the house:

My grandfather...and grandmother came from California where they had been living, about 1872, and bought the place....For a good many years my grandfather used the land (I believe there were 1200 acres) to grow sugar cane. He had a sugar house on the place and I remember as a very small child, going with my grandfather to the sugar house to get the thick syrup (lacuite) out of the troughs. Sometime in the 1890s he converted most of the plantation to growing cotton and the sugar house was made into a cotton gin. He did very well until the coming of the boll weevil about the beginning of the century. My grandmother had just died and he was pretty lonesome and despondent there with just me, a small child, for company, so he sold the plantation along with the lovely old

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furniture in it and the farm equipment, for a mere pittance, to the Ruffin Munsons....About a year after my grandfather sold Santa Maria the railroad bought rights from the Munsons and ran through the property just a few blocks away from the house. It was not close enough, however, to be objectionable and was, probably, a financial help to him.

Unfortunately, Mr. Munson did not find the place a money-maker and I believe he lost it. I know it was taken over by Putnam and Norman, a cotton firm here in New Orleans and they put a manager on it. I remember that they were raising fancy Pollen-China hogs and packaging and selling the most delicious sausage. Then, I don't know in what year, Bradford Hagan bought it. He eventually started the dairy business there which proved so profitable, Santa Maria dairy....Santa Maria was not a large home, as plantation houses go, and its chief beauty, as I remember it, was in its grounds. We had some lovely oak trees and my grandparents kept a Belgian gardener on the place to care for the gardens. My grandmother was a flower lover and her gardens were quite famous.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Census of 1880: Louisiana, East Baton Rouge Parish, Agriculture Census, page 15, under "Charles Knowlton."

Conveyance Records, East Baton Rouge Parish
Centroplex.

Letter from Gladys Morrill to "Rosalie," February 28, 1964, on file at State Historic Preservation Office, Baton Rouge.

National Register of Historic Places Nomination for "Santa Maria Plantation," listed December 29, 1978.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Capital Region Planning Commission, Historical
Landmarks of the Capital Region, Land Use Report
2A, July, 1973.

Prepared by John Easterly
Historian
State of Louisiana
Sibyl McCormac Groff
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Santa Maria's late date, 1877, illustrates the strength of the gallery-fronted plantation house tradition in Louisiana.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent. The present owners completely restored the house.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main house is 42 feet wide by 47 feet deep with an eight-foot front gallery and a rear wing. The T-shaped house has five bays and is one-and-a-half stories tall.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The upper story is faced with 5" wide clapboards on the front and rear and, 3" wide clapboard on the sides.
4. Structural system, framing: The ground story is a brick bearing wall with six shallow arches and a gray stucco facing. The main, upper story is constructed from circular sawn timbers with summer beams and joists.

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5. Porches: The most notable feature is the five-bay front gallery which rests on a basement arcade of segmental arches. The gallery is recessed under the main roof of the building, supported by box columns with molded capitals surmounted by a full entablature.

6. Chimneys: Two original interior chimneys sit on the ridge of the roof. There is also a modern chimney in the rear wing.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The windows and doors of the house are simply framed by flat boards. The front doorway has a transom over a Victorian double-roundhead panelled door.

b. Windows: The windows have six-over-six-light double-hung sashes. The shutters are the movable louvered type.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The gable roof encompasses the main block of the house, including the front gallery. The modern rear wing has a gable roof of its own, with a shed roof connecting the rear wing to the main house.

b. Cornice, eaves: Most of the eaves are treated with simple framing boards. The only cornice occurs on the front facade as part of the front gallery entablature.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The house has a center hall with two rooms on each side, three small rooms across the rear, and a rear wing.

2. Stairways: The only original staircase in the house is located on the southeast wall of the north room and features wainscoted side walls.

3. Flooring: The flooring is pine or cypress boards about 5" wide.

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4. Wall and ceiling finish: The major rooms on the main floor are finished in plaster with vertical board wainscoting in the stair well and the small attic rooms. The three small rooms in the rear gallery have clapboard walls.
5. Doorways and doors: Several of the major interior doorways have transoms. All of the doorways are simply framed and all have six panel doors with simple flat panels.
6. Decorative features: The only original mantel is in the dining room and has a crude aedicule motif: pilasters and a heavy entablature surmounted by a molded shelf.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting: The house and outbuildings are set amid flat and open farmland, now fallow, with an immediate enclosure of live oak trees, magnolias, camellias and other shrubs. The front of the property is enclosed by an elaborate picket fence.
2. Outbuildings: There are several outbuildings with clapboard and a large but undistinguished twentieth century barn to the rear. Adjacent to the house is a cistern and reproduction of an old garden pavilion built by the present owners. There is also a Creole frame cottage behind the house which was moved to its present site in the early twentieth century.

Prepared by Jonathan Fricker
Architectural Historian
State of Louisiana
Sibyl McCormac Groff
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Department of Public Works, Division of Community Development. Under the auspices of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth Anderson, Principal Architect, the project was completed in the summer of 1978 at the HABS field office, Department of Architecture, Louisiana State University. The team was comprised of Sibyl McCormac Groff (Columbia University), project supervisor/historian; Timothy Allanbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), project foreman; architect Kate Johns (Arizona State University); and student architects William J. Graham (University of Maryland), Robert D. Louton (University of Arkansas), and George W. Steinrock, Jr. (University of Detroit).

ADDENDUM TO
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